

Dear Paul:

This is the letter to some of the language men, prepared after consulting with Ralph.

November 12, 1963

Dear Professor de Chasca:

There's an experiment which we at the Writers' Workshop are planning to try next semester which I thought you might like to know about. Taking advantage of the presence on our staff of the distinguished novelist and translator of contemporary Greek poetry and prose, Professor Edmund Keeley, we plan to add to the present Fiction and Poetry Workshops a Translation Workshop.

This will afford students who wish to work on translations from various languages into English an opportunity to submit the literary quality of their English product to group criticism, and to discuss such problems and solutions as may be common to the attempt to turn any literary work from one language to another. In this they will have the guidance of a man who is well established as a serious and successful contemporary translator.

It requires a pretty high degree of temerity to introduce such a course, but I hope it will not seem to you altogether rash. We are emboldened by the knowledge that a workshop in translation will not really be a departure but perhaps a culmination--many students have worked on ambitious translation projects in the past or are doing so currently. Translation dissertations have sometimes been offered for graduate degrees, and we note that this form of dissertation is envisaged as one which may be offered frequently in the new Comparative Literature program. What we hope to be able to contribute to the student so engaged, through Mr. Keeley and others, is our experience in evaluating a result in English and, perhaps, a center for the many necessarily disparate works being undertaken in several languages.

We hope that, should the experiment with a Workshop be successful, a theoretical course may be added in problems and history of translation, and through all of this will most earnestly hope for the guidance and criticism --and, if it is practical, the participation--of the language departments and the Comparative Literature Department.

There are tremendously exciting possibilities for national and even international recognition and development of The University of Iowa as a center for creative translation of the highest quality. We realize that these possibilities have been created by the remarkable strength of our language departments, by the vision which has led to the establishment of the Comparative Literature program, and we hope that the opportunity we see for ourselves to bring our own sort of teaching experience to the field will seem to you a proper and necessary supplement. I should be very glad to know of any comment you might have, either now or later, on our plans.

Sincerely yours,

Professor Edmund de Chasca
Department of Romance Languages
217 Shaeffer Hall

Vance Bourjaily
Assistant Professor
The Writers Workshop
Department of English